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INTRODUCTION

THE U.S. CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM is currently facing a crisis involving race and poor outcomes for children and families of color. As a result of this crisis children of color continue to enter the system in disproportionate numbers and encounter extreme difficulty exiting the system. Racial disproportionality is evident when the percentage of children of color in any system, including the child welfare system, is higher than the percentage of children of color in the general population. Racial disparity occurs when the rate of disproportionality, poor outcomes, or deficient services of one group (e.g., African Americans) exceeds that of a comparison group (e.g., European/White Americans). Data have repeatedly shown that children of color are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system in the United States. For example, according to the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2007), African American children comprised 15 percent of the total U.S. child population under the age of eighteen; however, African American/black children accounted for 32 percent of the children placed in foster care. Although racial disproportionality is most severe and dramatic for African American children, American Indian children also experience higher rates of disproportionate placements in foster care than do children of other races or ethnicities. In 2004 American Indian children represented less than 1 percent of the total child population in the United States; however, 2 percent of children in foster care were American Indian. Hispanic/Latino children are 19 percent of the child population and 17 percent of the children in foster care.

Race is a significant factor in the decision to place a child in foster care. Research has shown that children of color, when compared to white